

Message Text

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FOR HODDING CARTER FROM TRATTNER

E.O. 11652: 11652:GDS

TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.), SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFINGS MARCH 29, MARCH 30

1. IN MARCH 29 SESSION, ASKED FOR REACTION TO ARBATOV
PIECE IN PRAVDA (WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS SAID U.S.
AND SOVIETS ARE AT CROSSROADS IN DETENTE AND U.S. MUST
MAKE TOUGH DECISIONS NECESSARY FOR SALT II), I DID NOT
OFFER OFFICIAL COMMENT BUT SAID ARBATOV ARTICLE WAS SERIOUS,
THOUGHTFUL COMMENTARY AND WE STUDYING IT CAREFULLY.
PURSUED IN MARCH 30 BRIEFING AS TO LEVEL OF OUR CONCERN
OVER ARTICLE AND WHAT WAS MEANT BY "CAREFUL STUDY", I
DECLINED TO DISCUSS LEVEL OF CONCERN AND INDICATED WE STUDY
ALMOST EVERYTHING SOVIETS HAVE TO SAY OF THIS KIND.

2. ON BRADSHAW ARTICLE IN STAR CONCERNING VANCE'S POSSIBLE
TRAVEL TO EUROPE TO MEET GROMYKO, I REFERRED ALL
QUESTIONS TO PARTY. LATER IN DAY, I ADDED (TO HANDFUL OF
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CORRESPONDENTS) THAT SUCH A MEETING IS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

3. MOOSE TRIP TO SOMALIA: IN MARCH 29 BRIEFING, I SAID
HIS EXCHANGES IN SOMALIA WERE PRELIMINARY; NO REAL DETAILS
WILL BE AVAILABLE UNTIL WE HAVE FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITHIN

USG AND WITH SOMALIS. MOOSE HAD SEVERAL TALKS WITH BARRE

AND OUR DELEGATION GOT BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEMS FACING SOMALI AUTHORITIES. TRIP RESULTED IN SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD AGREEMENT ON NATURE OF AN EXPANDED U.S.-SOMALI RELATIONSHIP. U.S. SIDE EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN SOMALI PLANS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF. WE ALSO DISCUSSED POSSIBLE DEFENSE ASSISTANCE, ALWAYS IN CONTEXT OF OUR CONTINUING CONCERN FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN COUNTRIES IN AREA AND OUR COMMITMENT TO TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ALL STATES IN THAT REGION.

4. THERE WAS EXTENSIVE QUESTIONING IN MARCH 30 SESSION ON SAUDI CHOICE (REPORTED IN WASHPOST MARCH 29) OF CERTAIN AMERICAN PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM TO REPRESENT IT IN U.S. AND ALLEGED CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT FIRM AND AMBASSADOR WEST. BOILED DOWN, MY REPLIES AMOUNTED TO (1) IT IS UP TO SAUDIS TO RUN THEIR AFFAIRS AND CHOOSE WHOM THEY WISH AS PR FIRM IN U.S.; (2) WE SEE NO IMPROPRIETY (IMPLIED IN POST ARTICLE AND MADE MORE EXPLICIT IN MARCH 30 SAFIRE COLUMN) ON PART OF ANY USG OFFICIAL IN THIS SITUATION; AND (3) WE CONTACTED AMB. WEST (CURRENTLY ON LEAVE IN U.S.) WHO INFORMED US THAT, ON REQUEST OF SAUDIS, HE PROVIDED THEM LIST OF SEVERAL COMPETENT U.S. PR FIRMS, WITHOUT ANY RECOMMENDATION FOR ANY ONE OF THEM. BELIEVE WE HAVE NOT HEARD THE LAST OF THIS ONE.

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5. WE STILL GETTING QUESTION WHEN U.S. WILL RESPOND TO CONGRESSIONAL QUERY ABOUT ISRAELI USE OF U.S. EQUIPMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. I LEFT IT WHERE SECRETARY HAD IT LAST WEEK. COOPER

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